



NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

A COMMON EFFORT · NEWSLETTER 2 · DECEMBER 1997

*Dear Friends:*

*Many of you have provided us with a wealth of information to consider in the planning process. We appreciate the attendance at the meetings in September, the mailbacks from our first newsletter, and the comments at our web site that so many of you were able to offer. This newsletter presents a summary of what we have heard and will present some of the foundations upon which we will develop alternatives early in 1998.*

*Your voice is important in helping to guide our planning efforts. If you participated by attending one of our initial meetings or by writing, thank you and keep those comments coming. If you haven't participated, now is the time to get involved. Let us know what you think.*

*Arthur E. Eck, Superintendent  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, National Park Service*

*Daniel C. Preece, Superintendent  
Angeles District, California Department of Parks and Recreation*

*Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy*

# What We Heard From You

Approximately 2,500 newsletters in English and Spanish were distributed in September 1997 to announce the beginning of the general management planning process for **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**. Seven public meetings, attended by approximately 120 individuals, were held in September 1997. Meetings were held in Los Angeles, Malibu, Santa Monica, Ventura, and Agoura Hills, and two were conducted with park staff. The responses we received from the newsletter comment forms, public meetings, and the National Park Service park planning page on the web site indicate there is great interest in the future of the park. A summary of the comments we received from you is available at the park at **30410 Agoura Road, Suite 100, Agoura Hills, CA 91301**.

## Overview

*Man has made such a mess of the local urban areas, let us work hard to keep him from messing up the mountains and coasts. Even more, let us try to undo the damage already done (Comment form 9/97).*

- Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is a place where people can enjoy peace, quiet, and privacy and can rejuvenate themselves from a high-stress, noisy, urban environment.
- The mountains' natural resources are critical to the management of the park and to the perpetuation of the Mediterranean ecosystem; without these resources there would no longer be a park.
- The SMMNRA provides an array of recreational opportunities, natural preserves, viewsheds, and cultural sites to satisfy the recreational and educational interests of the large nearby urban population.

## Natural and Cultural Resources

*Perpetuation of these mountains' resources is critical to the management of the park — all other management issues are subordinate to resource protection (Public meeting 9/23/97). Without the resources we will no longer have a park (Comment form 9/97).*

- Recreational opportunities and resource preservation often compete with one another.
- Overcrowding threatens resources and popular recreation sites.
- Natural values and habitat are often damaged by use.
- A balance must be struck between use and conservation to ensure visitor enjoyment and resource preservation.

- Preservation of the Mediterranean ecosystem — its biodiversity and natural processes — is an ongoing need.
- Continued development threatens components of the ecosystem, such as important plant communities.
- The natural beauty of the ecosystem is significant.
- Both contemporary and historic resources should be identified, evaluated for significance, and protected.
- Sites such as Point Dume and Gillette Ranch have archaeological resources needing further protection.
- Protection of sites should not interfere with the privacy and confidentiality of Native American observances.

## Resource Preservation and Development

*The animals that inhabit this place have called these mountains home since long before man ever set foot here. We have enjoyed the sights and sounds of the wildlife that have somehow managed to hang on despite the ever-increasing fragmentation of their precious habitat (Comment form 9/97).*

- Urban encroachment threatens the resources of the park.
- Remaining undeveloped lands should be included within the park boundary.
- Prohibit industrial development or high-rises, especially in the canyons.
- Promote no-growth policies with a permanent ban on development.
- Allow some new development as long as impacts are minimized.
- Limit development on ridgelines.
- Protect resources through land acquisition by federal, state, or other agencies; boundary expansions; and acquisition of specific properties.
- Provide more parking.
- Implement a shuttle system to eliminate large parking lots and alleviate traffic congestion.
- Construct a central visitor center with contact stations scattered throughout the park.
- Limit the number of visitor centers.
- Avoid new developments such as roads, water systems, and buildings within the recreation area boundaries.
- Do not develop area into a theme park.
- Create a seamless, uninterrupted network of public open space that connects urban and natural areas.
- Make appropriate land use decisions, form partnerships, and initiate new approaches to problems and opportunities.

## Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

*Preserve habitat and wildlife corridors — and therefore genetic diversity, and threatened and endangered species and their web of life — by various means, including more acquisition (Public meetings 9/22/97 and 9/24/97; comment form 9/97).*

- Protect all native plant communities (such as chaparral, oak woodlands, and coastal sage) and critical wildlife habitat, particularly those that are threatened or endangered.
- Point Mugu, Malibu Lagoon, Malibu Creek (Rindge Dam), and all riparian and wetland areas are considered areas of concern.
- Use ongoing research, public education, land management, and land acquisition to achieve protection of these areas
- Perpetuate important wildlife corridors and populations by reducing development and recreational use.
- Dedicate areas to wildlife and for corridors that enable wildlife to move to and from the Santa Monica Mountains into areas such as the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains, and eventually the Los Padres and Angeles Forests.
- Preserve habitat for wildlife and preserve corridors that allow for dispersion of plant and animal species.
- Provide over- or underpasses and acquire land.
- Remove exotic plants and reestablish native plants.



## Fire Management

- Controlled burns should benefit the ecosystem and prevent wildfires
- Some firebreaks should be eliminated.
- Fire prevention should be considered a higher priority than trail use and park structures.

## Air and Water Quality

- Increased traffic along roadways such as Malibu Canyon could be contributing to deteriorated air quality in the park.
- Deteriorating water quality and the integrity of some watersheds such as Calleguas and Malibu Creek are concerns.
- Ongoing water quality contamination continues from development and other sources.
- Possibly remove Rindge Dam and return the Malibu watershed to an earlier state.
- Species such as the steelhead trout could be adversely affected by the removal of the dam.

## Visitor Use and Facilities

*It is important for urban people to calm down, breathe deeply, and experience nature (Interagency meeting 9/4/97).*

- Complete the Backbone Trail to establish a continuous link throughout the park for recreationists and as a wildlife corridor.
- Provide connecting trails and trails across the mountains or build new trails.
- Ban mountain bikes or open more wilderness trails to bikes and horses.
- Prohibit horses and bikes from single-track trails.
- Maintain multiuse trails.
- Provide separate trails for incompatible uses.
- Do not ban mountain bikes in the future.
- Allow motorcycles and other motorized vehicles.
- Open all trails to all users.
- User groups need to put their differences aside and work toward higher, common goals.
- Provide better access for a broader population, specifically minorities, the elderly, visitors with disabilities, and innercity residents.
- Trails should be provided that would be suitable for family use, with level ground near trailheads.

- Enhance access to beaches; improve parking at some sites; and provide better signs, a fishing and stocking program, more campsites, potable water, toilets, and more volunteer patrols.
- Establish a carrying capacity, a stricter enforcement of rules, and a safe environment free from vandalism.

## Education and Interpretation

*Visitors become well-informed users as they enter the park. After learning about and enjoying the special spots preserved in the mountains, the visitors would place great value on the SMMNRA and be committed to support it (Public meeting 9/25/97).*

- Enhance the publicity program of the recreation area to make the public more aware of the treasures in the park.
- Through culturally diverse educational programs inside and outside the park, visitors could gain appreciation and respect for the park's resources and encourage participation in preservation practices.
- All ages and segments of the population should have a meaningful experience according to their individual interests.
- Outreach programs should reach schoolchildren and, especially, introduce innercity children to outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Interpretive programs should tell the following stories: water's role in the development of Los Angeles, history of individual sites in the park, mining, the Spanish era, the natural environment, and the Chumash and Gabrielleno and their minimal impact on the land.
- Provide more information on the cultural landscapes, industrial development, and public transportation in southern California, entertainment, recreation, watershed restoration, and the relationship between fire and the ecology of the area.

## Acquisition and Funding

*Acquisition, Acquisition, Acquisition! . . . The more the better! . . . We need Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to be bigger, more complete! (Public meeting 9/24/97; comment form 9/97).*

- The park should acquire and preserve more land, especially open space, to prevent overdevelopment of private land.
- The opportunity to hike in nearby undisturbed areas is important.
- SOKA University property could be condemned and acquired.

- More lands should be accessible and available for development, and the recreation area should be reduced to a few hundred acres.
- Private property rights and values might be adversely affected by government actions.
- Funding would be inadequate to acquire undeveloped adjacent land parcels or have enough operations staff.
- Do not allow commercialization and inappropriate use just to raise funds.
- New and innovative methods of raising revenue, such as the park capitalizing on and using the resources of the entertainment industry, could be possible avenues.

## Partnerships

*NPS has become the unifying whole — tying together large chunks of state park lands and bringing together other agencies (Public meeting 9/26/97).*

- The National Park Service should work to develop better partnerships with other agencies and private landowners.
- All agencies should share a common vision that will lead to cooperative land planning for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the provision of recreation.
- Joint goals should be accomplished through shared information, shared resources, and uniform legal standards.
- The park should become a self-managed park with no government entities involved.
- Commercial entities, residents, and visitors should invest in the perpetuation of the area.

## The Value of Your Input

The above comments were used to identify what the park should look and feel like in the future. This description, which is provided in the "Vision for the Park" section, broadly defines what resource conditions and visitor experiences should be parkwide.

The "Mission Statement" and "Vision for the Park" together serve as the foundation for all further planning activities. The alternatives for future management of the park will seek to achieve the resource conditions and visitor experiences expressed in these statements. The mission statement was a joint effort among the National Park Service, California State Parks, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.





# Vision for the Park

## Quality of Life

SMMNRA contributes to the regional quality of life in a variety of ways, including protection of aesthetic, cultural, and natural resources; economic well-being; and health, safety, and education of its citizens.

## Resources

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is locally, nationally, and internationally recognized, and valued for its Mediterranean ecosystem and significant cultural resources.

## Mission Statement

The mission of this area is to protect and enhance on a sustainable basis one of the world’s last remaining examples of a Mediterranean ecosystem and the area’s resources, unimpaired for present and future generations. Additionally, the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area provides an interlinking system of parklands and open spaces that offer compatible recreation and educational opportunities accessible to a diverse public. This is accomplished by an innovative federal, state, local, and private partnership that enhances the region’s quality of life and provides a model for other parks challenged by urbanization.

The diverse and important natural and cultural resources of the Mediterranean ecosystem within SMMNRA improve in condition and flourish into the future. Areas worthy of wilderness designation are identified and protected within the park.

Collaborative scientific research and innovative resource management programs are implemented by federal, state, and local agencies; universities; and others.

Species and habitat diversity are protected and enhanced within the park. Large contiguous blocks of habitat are preserved. Wide-ranging species such as the mountain lion are protected by preserving habitat into the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests via the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains.

Native plant species and plant communities, such as coastal sage scrub, coast live oak woodland, and valley oak savanna, are adequately protected and restored. Exotic plant species are controlled or eliminated.

Cultural resources are protected, preserved, and interpreted. The inventories of historic resources, such as outstanding contemporary architecture, are completed.

Fire is managed throughout the SMMNRA to mimic the natural fire regime as much as possible.

Water quality is maintained or improved throughout the park such that riparian communities, natural stream characteristics, estuaries, and coastal waters are not impaired for designated beneficial uses.

The scenic qualities of the mountain and coastal landscapes within the park are protected and enhanced.

## Interpretation and Education

An integrated interpretive program developed cooperatively by visitor service providers throughout the recreation area offers extensive opportunities for diverse experiences related to natural and cultural resources.

Information and interpretation provided at appropriate locations throughout SMMNRA and nearby communities encourage safe, enjoyable resource use and protection, and enables visitors with differing levels of interest and understanding to easily find the area's cultural and natural features, visitor facilities, activities, and services.

Each part of the park reflects the specific history of that site or location, creates a memory, and serves various cultures.

Visitors gain an appreciation of the Native American cultural history, but privacy and confidentiality for Native American observances are provided.

Neighbors and visitors to the recreation area receive and understand information on the diversity and importance of the Mediterranean ecosystem. They understand the threats to the resources and offer support and cooperation in carrying out its preservation.

Using pioneering techniques of public education, diverse visitors from varied cultural backgrounds acquire a special appreciation for park resources.

An effective educational outreach program provides instruction on the functions, issues, opportunities, and value of the ecosystem in an expanding urban community. A formal component of this outreach program is developed in partnership with, and augments the curriculum of, the local educational system.

Staff and participants in interpretation and education programs reflect the cultural diversity of the urban community.

## Visitor Use and Experience

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is recognized as an outstanding place where visitors have an opportunity to appreciate undeveloped scenic open spaces and enjoy diverse, abundant wildlife and vegetation. Surrounded by a heavily urbanized area, the recreation area is an oasis where visitors experience peace, solace, and renewal.

Mulholland Drive is a scenic corridor providing access to and linking diverse points of opportunity for recreation, interpretation, and appreciation involving natural and cul-

tural resources. The expanded Backbone Trail provides the same range of experiences for nonmotorized use.

Transit programs are developed to serve and entice the culturally diverse population of Southern California and the world to explore the Santa Monica Mountains.

A realistic and viable recreation management program satisfies both user needs and resource protection requirements. Potential conflicts among recreational uses are anticipated and managed appropriately to enhance the visitor's experience, provide a safe environment, and avoid conflicts.

The recreation area provides universal access to facilities and resources for all segments of the public. All facilities are safe and sustainable, and their operation has no adverse impact on natural or cultural resources or visitor experiences. Moreover, facilities are designed to be educational exhibits of sustainable technologies.

Strategically placed visitor contact facilities at several locations within the recreation area interpret significant stories and provide information and directions to sites and activities.

## Resource Protection as It Relates to Development

The built environment does not intrude on the natural environment; it is aesthetically pleasing and uses compatible design principles.

Development of wild lands within SMMNRA is discouraged. Resource protection and management take priority in decisions regarding proposed development and use within all lands.

Development density strategies promote and perpetuate biological diversity. External land use decisions involving growth management and urban expansion are compatible with preservation goals.

Natural erosion processes actively continue within SMMNRA, and coastal bluffs are protected from further development. The dynamics that shape geological processes in the Santa Monica Mountains are better understood and translated into resource protection and growth management strategies.

Rebuilding public and private facilities destroyed by natural processes (such as fires, floods, earthquakes, and geologic hazards) in their previous locations is discouraged.

# What is the Next Step

In the next few months, the planning team will develop alternative ways to achieve what the park should look and feel like in the future. Your involvement throughout the process is a key component in the success of the final general management plan.

If you would like a copy of newsletter #1, you can contact the park at 818-597-9192 or log onto the NPS web site at <http://www.nps.gov/planning/index.html> under the Planning Products Library. If you wish to submit comments, please send them to the park at 30410 Agoura Road, Suite 100, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Newsletter #2 will appear on the NPS park planning page at <http://www.nps.gov/planning/current.htm> and you can also submit any comments you may have at this web site address.

The park will distribute newsletters at each stage of the planning process, explaining and highlighting what has occurred, describing the next steps in the process, and providing information on public meeting schedules.

The following chart reflects the schedule for the general management plan process. The highlighted area is the step we are in now.

## When Will General Management Planning Activities Take Place?

1	<b>Initiate Project.</b> The planning team assembles, begins to identify the project's scope and issues, and customizes the planning process.	Read the newsletter and comment on the response form by September 15, 1997. Join the mailing list
2	<b>Identify Planning Context</b>	Participate in public meetings the week of September 22, 1997 (see schedule).
3	<b>Develop and Evaluate Alternatives</b>	Read and comment on this newsletter. In late spring 1998, participate in public meetings and comment on newsletter to evaluate alternatives.
4	<b>Publish a Draft Document</b>	Read the draft plan and send in your comments. Participate in public meetings (early 1999).
5	<b>Publish Final Document</b>	Read the final plan and summary.
6	<b>Implement the Approved Plan</b> (Summer 2000 and beyond)	